

✓ DR&HS Delves into Wright Building

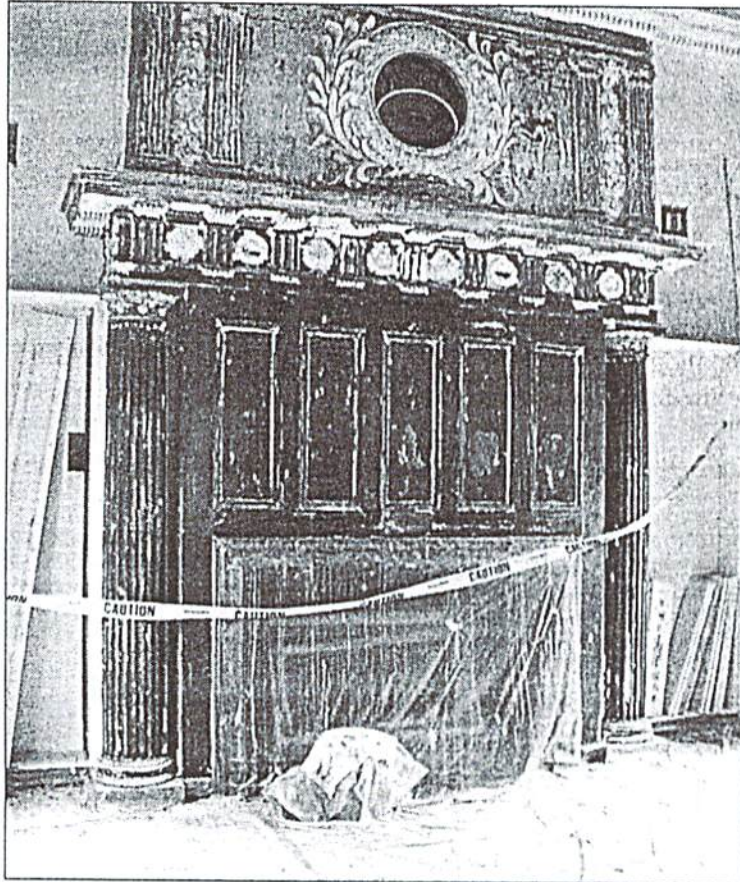
By MORAG MACLACHLAN

The date the Wright Building will be reopened looks as if it will be postponed from October to January. Yet, anxious residents will not have to wait for months to learn how the Duxbury Rural & Historical Society plans on using the portion of the building opened in 1909.

DR&HS Executive Director Patrick Browne said the group will offer the public a sneak peek at how it will occupy the space during a presentation held on Sunday at 4 p.m. at the barn of the King Caesar House.

"This is designed to let the community know how the building will be used, what it will look like and what we want to do," Browne said.

On tap for the afternoon are details of the intriguing life of Georgiana Wright, a glimpse into the society's vast archives and a slide presentation of how the building is being restored to the way it looked when it served as the



This fireplace sits in the portion of the Wright Building opened in 1909. The Duxbury Rural & Historical Society will soon occupy the space in what used to be the town's library. The Wright Building and its fixtures are being restored to their original design. White paint is being removed, yielding the original gold leafing and dark stain of the fireplace.

Photo by Patrick Browne

town's library. Browne said the society's president, Ken Johnston, will open the afternoon's activities by talking about the group's archives and how the Wright Building will be utilized to preserve these historic documents. The archives are currently housed in the Drew House on Washington Street, but will soon be housed in the room to the right of the main entrance to the 1909 building.

"The Drew House is damp and not as attractive. It can also be claustrophobic," Johnston said. "The Wright Building is being refurbished to recreate the original environment. The archives will be housed in a room that is climate controlled. We are hoping people will come in and use the archives more. We are trying to get several leather chairs so people can nestle in and do research."

Browne said Tony Kelso is the town's authority on the Wright family. He will speak about the Wrights and why the family donated the building to the town. Kelso said he plans to speak for about 15 to 20 minutes about the Wrights' background. His talk will clear up any common misconceptions about the family, for example, the belief that the Wright Building was donated in honor of Georgiana's deceased son.

"Her son died in 1888 in an elevator shaft accident in Boston," Kelso said. "The Wright Building was a family memorial because Georgiana also lost her first husband, another son and her youngest daughter. It's a melancholy story."

The Wright Building was

not the first structure nor the first library given to the town by the family. The family donated a wooden guesthouse to be used as the first town library. In 1907, Georgiana Wright recognized the need for a more substantial library in Duxbury. Kelso said the old wooden library was converted into town hall and the town's first fire station was moved from the site where the Wright Building now sits so that this new library could be constructed. Kelso added that the old wooden library is still in use today. It is located at 178 St. George St. and houses several small businesses. He will share more stories about the Wrights and their donations during Sunday's presentation.

"I'm fascinated by them and I want to make the Wrights more than cardboard people in history," Kelso said.

Browne said he and Lee Michael Kennedy of the society's board of trustees will show slides demonstrating how the interior of the Wright Building is being restored.

"This is right up Lee's alley," Browne said "Lee runs the Lee Kennedy Company, a construction company in Boston. He's been a point person with the Wright Building for years because his company restored parts of the Boston Public Library and the libraries of many academic institutions."

Kennedy said he remembered using the library as a child. He said he is excited to be able to work on restoring the space and assisting the society with its archival storage.

"We've been trying to get a solution for the society's archival storage problems," Kennedy said. "I helped the society decide how to best use the space. I understood their climate control needs and we also wanted to bring modern technology into the building. For example, people will be able to use their laptops in the reading room."

The pair will share the architect's plan and progress photos of the space. One of the slides the pair will show the audience involves the removal of white paint from a fireplace in the building. Underneath the paint, old stain and gold leaf reveal the fireplace's original design. Browne said the Wright Building will allow the public to access two main areas of the society's collection...the archives and the small historical library. The archival collection includes historic letters, papers and journals. Browne said visitors can study the archives for research projects and browse the texts included in the historical library.

In addition to being informative, Johnston hopes the presentation inspires residents to financially support the society's use of the Wright Building.

"It is expensive to maintain a building and we also want to hire a part time archivist," Johnston said.

Browne said the society plans to have its portion of the Wright Building open regular hours during weekday mornings.